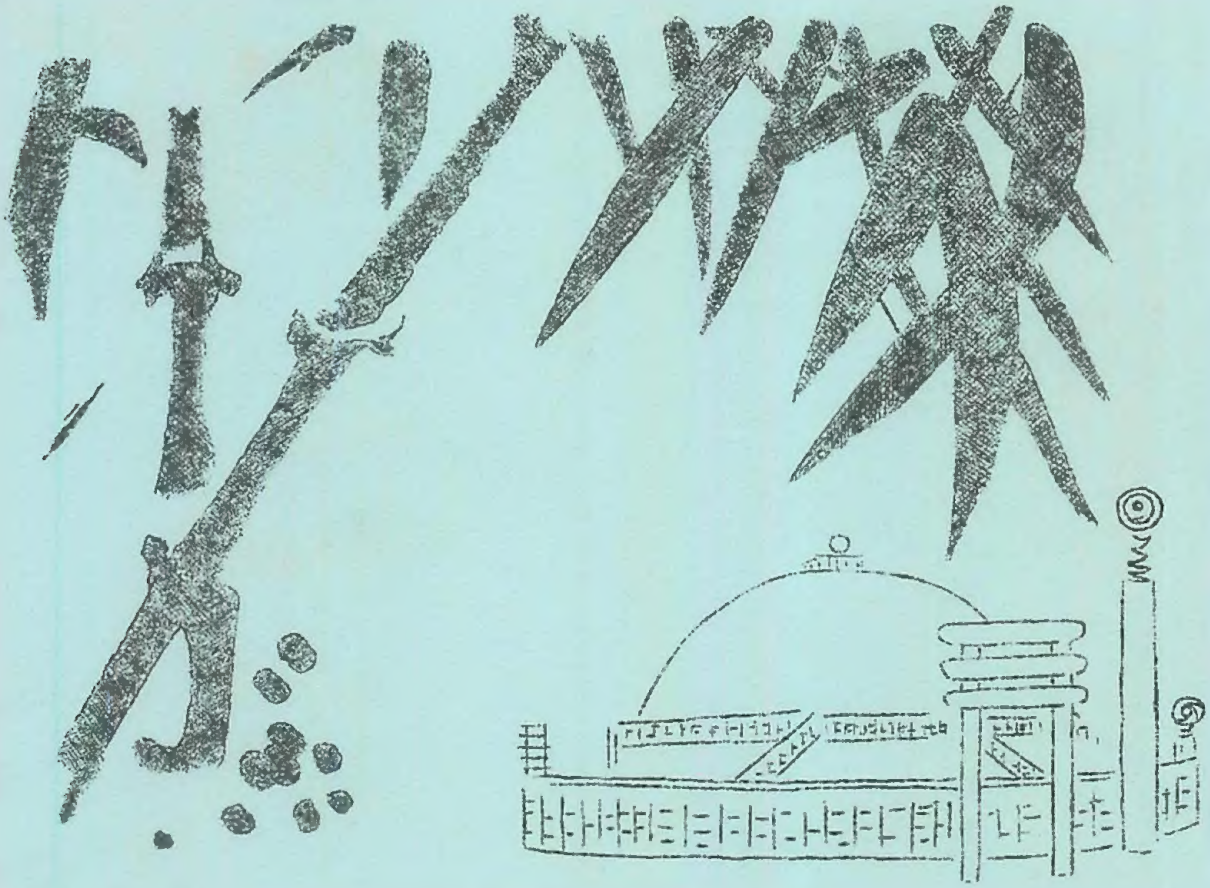
XERO 1



XERO 1

SEPTEMBER/1960

CONTENTS

Xerogenisis..... 2
an editorial, sort of

The Insidious Mr. Ward.....Pat 3
which wasn't his professional name, you know

PSYCHO — a review.....Harlan Ellison 6
in which Harlan says a few things to Charlie

The Worlds of Titus Groan.....Pat again 9
and no kidding thing this time

Crossword Horror.....Frank Arthur Kerr 16
first correct solution wins a copy of Flying Saucers

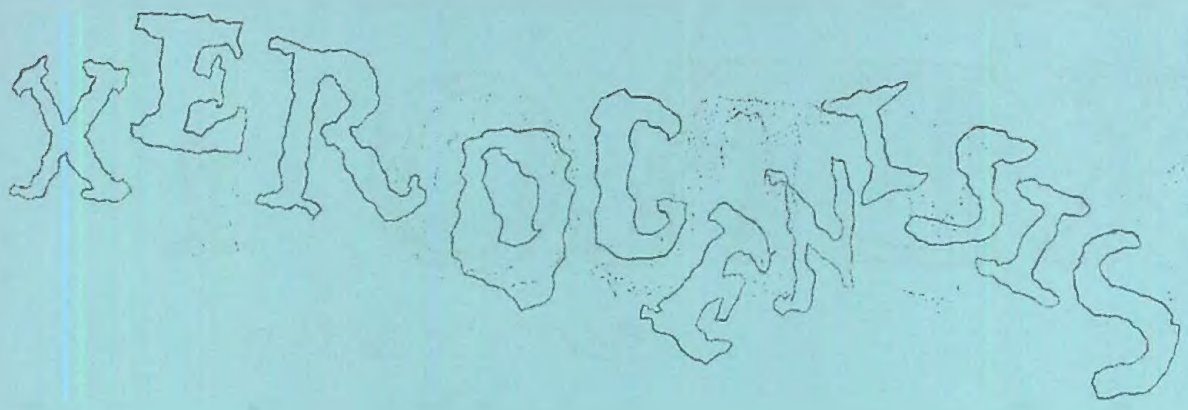
And All in Color for a Dime.....Dick/ 17
"Heheheh," said someone

Reverberations of the Rumble..Divers Hands 29
letters

Absolute Xero..... 36
the <u>real</u> editorial

XERO is foisted upon an unsuspecting fandom by Pat and Dick Lupoff, 215 E. 73rd Street, New York 21, N.Y. Cover thish was drawn, stencilled, & run off by Joe Sanders. Other art, as indicated, is by Lee Ann Tremper or T. Hief, which anagram should not strain even the fannish brain.

Mimeo by QWERTYUIOPress



As I bent over the work I could feel something stir in my veins. Some long-quiescient, nearly-forgotten thing, some substance, some force unfelt for nearly a decade began to insinuate itself through the edges of consciousness.

I tried to put it out of my mind as I had so many times in the past. I attempted to suppress the striving as I had so often, as with deft strokes of the long, sharp incisor I brought nearer completion the creation which lay, translucently thin, upon the canted operating platform.

But the thing, the power, the substance in my veins was rising, poluting my bloodstream, intoxicating my senses. Could I finish my task before I lost control? Had I strength to perform the operation just this once as I had sworn to myself I would?

No! Too late! The black, sluggish thing that had lain within me for eight years was bursting free. No longer could I hold fettered the urge.

The sight of a stencil, blue, cooly lighted through a mimeoscope... the feel once more of a stylus between my fingers...the pungence of correction fluid in my eager, quivering nostrils...all this was too much to resist any longer.

The ink flowed. The black, thick, viscous stuff coursed hot, fast, through veins and through arteries, into the heart, the hands, the BRAIN and I was trapped again, caught, hooked, helplessly ensnared!

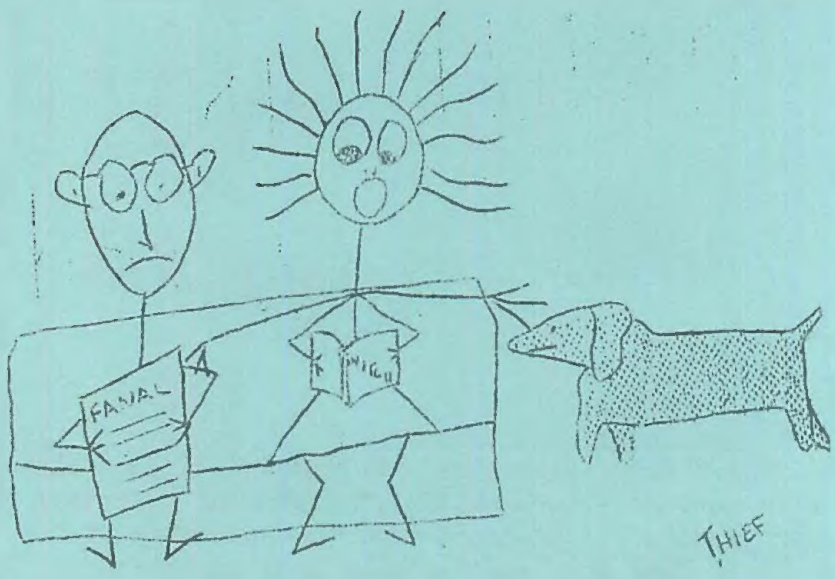
After eight years of restraint, I would, I must, I am pubbing. There is no hope, nor possible salvation. A fan can publish once and gafiate, and stay, by force of spirit and will, away from the becking, begging, beguiling mimeo. But once he slips, once he returns to the fanpubbing he so painfully quitted, all hope dissolves. He will spend the rest of his days either as an abject slave to his peculiar addiction, or as a miserable wretch cut off from his sole irreplaceable need.

Dick Lupoff

the insidious mr. ward

BY PAT LUPOFF

You would think that a book bearing the title"Brood of The Witch Queen" would be a real thriller-diller...the kind of book that is able to make even the most stout-hearted of you shiver in your shoes, and that will evoke the most terrifying of nightmares. Such a book, you might think, is not to be read when you are all alone in a big(or little) house at bedtime. This is, of course, what I thought when I discovered this book by Sax Rohmer, at a book shop. A quick glance at the at the table of contents assured me that this was indeed a spine tingling book. Wow! With chapter headings such as: "The Phantom Hands". "The Rustling Shadows", "The Scorpion Wind","The Witch Queen". and "Lair of the Spiders", just to mention a few, how could it fail? Now I must admit at this time, about a year ago, my knowledge of Sax Rohmer was quite slight. I'd only read one or two of his Dr. Fu Manchu books, and while I had found them entertaining, they had not terrified me in the least. But "Brood of the Witch Queen" I thought, "Ah, That's another matter entirely." I bought it, and at home I begged Dick not to leave me alone even for a minute. With him on one side of me and our dog on the other, I commenced to read. After reading the first few chapters, I began to feel very brave. This story wasn't scary at all. It was downright amusing. Of course it was supposed t o be a terrifying tale, but I hadn't taken into account Rohmer"s style of writing. He writes with so much naive enthusiasm that any atmosphere of terror that exists in the book is quickly snuffed out. The only exception to this so far, that I've been able to find, is in his book, by far his best I think, "The Day The World Ended". But don't get me started on that.



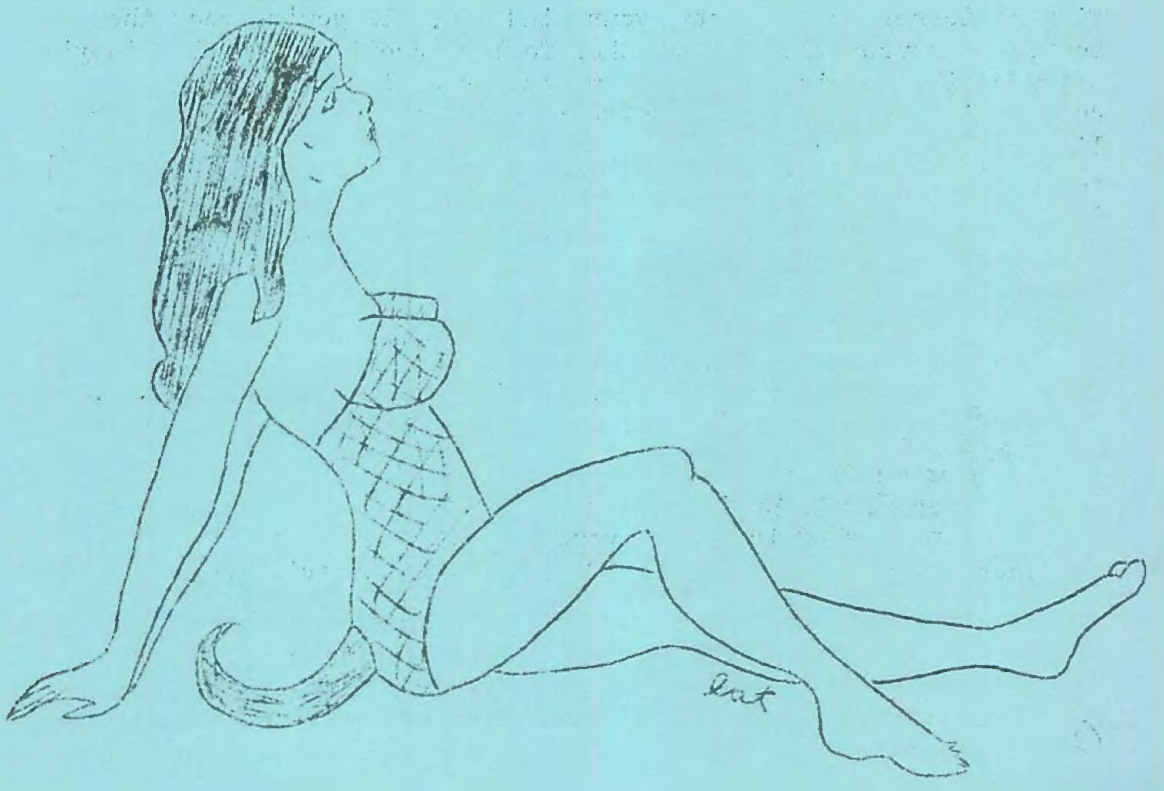
Oh the plot of "Brood of the 'itch 'ueen" is frightening enough. The mummy of a child is found in an ancient tomb in Egypt by Dr, Cairn and the brilliant Egyptologist, Sir Michael Ferrara. By obeying instructions written of a piece of papyrus, which had also been found in the tomb, the mummy of the child is brought to life! He is adopted by Sir Michael and given the name of Antony Ferrara. Of course Antony becomes the evil villain of the story. He certainly looks the part. He had:

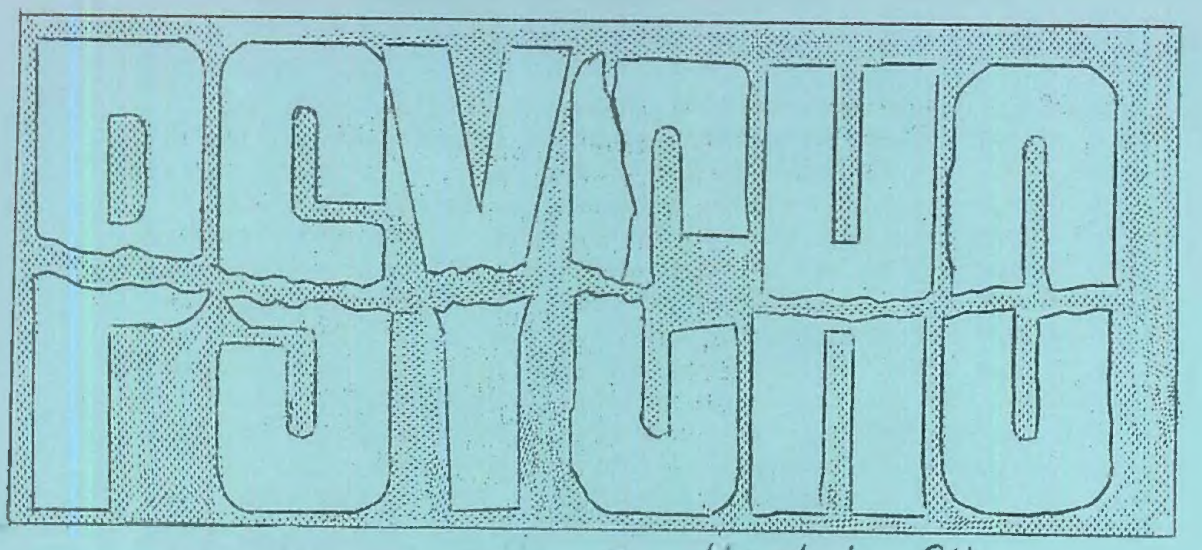
> ...almond shaped eyes, black as night, (which) gleamed strangely beneath the low, smooth brow. The lank black hair appeared lustreless by comparison. His lips were very red. In his whole appearance there was something repellently effeminate.

All women were strangely attracted to him . Antony can perform deeds of Egyptian black magic and thus sets out to destroy the world. Now here is the one point that irks me. When the book opens, Antony Ferrara has already wrecked a good deal of havoc. He has killed his adopted father and now seeks to get his clutches on the dead Sir Michael's beautiful ward, Myra Duquesne. Dr. Cairn knows

this because he knows the secret of Antony's origin. Both he, and his handsome but (as all Rohmer's heroes seem to be) not too bright son, Rob, are in grave danger at the hands of Antony. But Dr. Cairn maintains an almost chivalric politeness toward Antony and he insists that his son do the same. Until the climax of the book, which by the way is truly exciting, this odd relationship between hero and villan persists. Of course this presents some amusing scenes. For example, just after Antony has evoked some evil spirits and tried to kill Rob, Bob, the next day, makes a social call on Antony, and they reminice politely about life at Oxford! Good grief! Can you see behaving that way toward someone who is out to do you in? I guess I'm just not a truly polite person. Yes, I know that the "Brood of the Witch Queen" is a fantasy but such behavior is even too fantastic for the wildest and wooliest fantasy.

Now after saying all sorts of bad things about this book, I must admit that I thoroughly enjoyed it. Like most Sak Rohmer books (I've gone on quite a Sax Rohmer binge since then) its a lot of fun. You learn some interesting things about black magic which could be useful if you are surrounded by bothersome people. And who wants to b e scared that badly anyway?





reviewed by Harlan Ellison

Now, to begin, let's set the ground rules: you're a guy who makes his living writing, you know all the cliches, all the phony starts, and you can usually second-guess the movie-scripters every time out. You are over twenty-one, find the mockings and mewlings of Lugosi and Chaney more pitiable than frightening, and the last time you were really scared was when the platoon leader wakened you for guard at 4 in the morning out on bivouac. Futher, you've read the book, know the author is a greater wit than weirdie, and you're all set to be bored. Ground rules set. Witness in point: this reviewer. I went to see the Bloch-Hitchcock "Psycho".

Frankly, I had the shit scared out of me.

No two ways about it, Charlie, this time the've pulled off the Indian rope trick. It starts out like a below-par chapter of "Stella Dallas" and pretty chop-chop leaves all reality behind as the fist of terror wraps around your windpipe. If you've read the book, be assured the moom pitcher follows pretty faithfully(they've extended the opening to give you some drool-invoking scenes of Janet Leigh in her bra and half-slip, and they've taken literary license with the character of Norman, the son who runs the motel). (As to the license taken with Norman's character, I feel it is all to the good as warmed-over by Tony Perkins: brooding, pensive, darkly intense, engaging, altogether terrifying in its simplicity and naturalism.)

If you haven't read the book, the gravest disservice will be done you by the trap-mouth who spills the plot. Far be it from me to kill the goose However(he said, remembering how annoyed he used to get in high school when oral book reports were concluded,"And if you want to know what happens, you"ll have to read the book."), the scene is the Southwest, the opening gun gets fired as Miss Leigh, full in the midst of an affair with a young divorced cat from a small town somewhere, heads out with a bagful of her employer's loot. She stops,

in her mad flight, at a rundown motel operated by likeable but lopsided Tony Perkins, who has nasty fights with his Mother, seen as a shadow through the window of their brooding, Addams-like mansion on the hill...under the scud-filled cadaverous-grey sky.

That's it. That'all you get. From there on out, you had better bring the Miltown out of your weskit pocket. Because at that point Hitchcock uncorks some of the most brutally gagging detailwork ever to grace the screen. Consider: on TV and suchlike, murder is a fairly uncomplicated matter. You want someone dead, you stab or shoot him..once...and down he goes. Life just ain't like that, Charlie. In the real world (the one where you have to carry out the garbage or it begins to smell fainly bad) murder can be mucho difficult. Just consider again: the guy doesn't want to die. He fights you as you try to stab him. He grabs your arm. You struggle. He throws you off balance. You get in slight slashes to the arms in an attempt to land a fatal blow. Blood begins to spatter. The struggle goes on. Reality.

That's right, Charlie. That's what Hitchcock has given us in "Psycho." And this, this grotesque pathological attention to the sensational aspects of reality combined with obscure camera angles and stream-of-consciousness music leaves the viewer in a state of debilitation and shakenness.

It was so painful...the suspense, the horror of it all...that twice I felt compelled to get up and leave the theatre. I literally, could not stand it. And to top it off, the ending is in the finest tradition of the macabre. If "Diabolique" with its eyeball-thumbing scene scared you, this picture will stop your pump permamently. I can say with all sureness that no one will escape terror at this show.

It was filmed the smartest way possible(for this sort of flick) in black and white, and the cast is brilliant. They all have dimension and purpose, and what befalls each of them (even the unseen Mother) matters--to you.

Go then, Charlie, with my best wishes and my condolences. Because after you've seen this film, you'll be scared to ever take a shower in a motel again. And that, Charlie baby, is a promise.

Reprinted, at the risk of a copywrite suit, from the letter column of the NEW YORK TIMES for Sunday, July 24, 1960:

I want to register my despair, horror, and anger upon seeing Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho", a film which is currently being shown in New York; despair, because of my own confusion on the problem of film censorship in this country. In recent times, movies have been shown which present, with at least some degree of taste and maturity, problems which in the past would have been censored prudishly.

"Psycho" presents an altogether different problem, the problem of violence. To my horror(intentionally aroused, I presume, by the director), I witnessed, for example, the stabbing of a naked woman in a shower in ugly detail. While frank discussion of the mechanics of reproduction and the somewhat modest display of physical tenderness in films have met with opprobrium, both in the press and in the courts, tasteless violence goes virtually without opposition. Does the recent relaxation of film censorship require the admission of a deliberately sadistic movie?

Futhermore, I am angry because of the salesmanship associated with "Psycho". If censorship no longer exists in any area, certainly the moviegoer is entitled to censor for himself. Yet, Mr. Hitchcock's benign and friendly voice exhorts moviegoers in line before the theatre not to tell of their experiences within, almost exhorts them to become a member of a "Psycho" club, initiation to which is the frightening and ugly film itself.

JAMES H. SCHWARTZ, M.D.
New York City.

the worlds of titus groan

by Pat Lupoff

Mervyn Peake has so far written three books and a novelet which deal with the life of Titus Groan. The books that comprise the trilogy are: Titus Groan, Gormenghast, and Titus Alone. The novelet, Boy In Darkness, is a weird and terrifying fantasy which appeared in the collection Sometime Never.

Leaving out, for the moment, Boy In Darkness, what is the trilogy of Titus about? On the title page of the English edition of Titus Groan there appears the title "The Life of Titus Groan". It's true that the three main novels deal with Titus' life, from infancy to early manhood. This trilogy, however, is more than just a story about a boy named Titus who lives in a gloomy old castle called Gormenghast. In depicting the life and adventures of Titus, Peake gives his pessimistic opinion of all of society, both the old and the new.

Gormenghast, which is the setting for the first two books, represents the old world with all of its binding traditions and rituals which start out having a definite meaning but lose all semblance of reality when constantly performed year after year, decade after decade. In Titus Alone, the last book of the trilogy, Titus escapes from Gormenghast, the old world, to the modern industrial world outside. Although the inhabitants of the modern society in which Titus finds himself are not hampered by meaningless ritual, they are burdened with the necessity to conform. In Titus Alone, Titus does not wish to conform to the unwritten rules of society. The trouble that he finds himself in because of his nonconformity forms the crux of the book.

Although the Titus books together form a complete unit, each of them can be dealt with as a separate entity chronologically. The four works of Titus' life are arranged as follows: First Titus Groan, then the fantasy, Boy In Darkness, then Gormenghast, and lastly Titus Alone. The events in Boy In Darkness seem to occur either before or simultaneously with the events in the beginning of Gormenghast although Boy In Darkness was written six years after Gormenghast. In case you're interested in such matters, Titus Groan was published in 1946, Gormenghast in 1950, Boy In Darkness in 1956, and Titus Alone in 1959.

The first of this series, Titus Groan, introduces the inhabitants of Gormenghast and the infant Titus who has just been born at the opening of the book. Although the book is called Titus Groan, Titus himself plays a relatively small part in it, since at its conclusion he is only one year old. Titus Groan sets the stage for the remaining books in the series. Gormenghast is a sort of never-never land belonging to no particular space or time. As I said before, however, life at Gormenghast represents life in years gone by. Mervyn Peake does not designate Gormenghast to a particular geographical region, but he can't help giving us the feel of an old English castle. The people who live in Gormenghast, especially the Earl's personal valet, Flay, seem English in their attitudes.

Briefly the plot of Titus Groan is this (if indeed it can be said to have a definite plot.)---Titus is born. He is heir to the title of 77th Earl of Gormenghast. His father, Lord Sepulchrave, is the 76th earl. Things go on from day to day in a monotonous tradition at Gormenghast, until a new boy appears in the kitchen, a dirty urchin named Steerpike. Steerpike, in spite of his coating of dirt and his humble station in life, has one advantage which most of the inhabitants of the castle lack; he has a shrewd brain this attribute, coupled with the fact that he lacks any conscience whatsoever, makes Steerpike a completely ruthless and ambitious youth well on the way to sucess. (Does Steerpike represent modern material ambition?) Escaping the confines of the kithhen and the clutches of the master of the kitchen, Swelter(as nauseating a character as you will ever want to meet) Steerpike hides in the upper regions of the castle and begins by trying to ingrate himself with all of the most important people that he can. By the end of the book he is alarmingly successful. He has made some headway with Fuschia, Titus' melancholy and naive sixteen year old sister. He has flattered the lanky spinster Irma outrageously and thus has brought her completely in his power. At first he even makes considerable progress with Irma's brother, Dr. Prunesquallor. Prunesquallor, however, is one of the few people at Gormenghast, who is possessed of a goodly number of brains. Steerpike realizes that it would not take long for the doctor to sense his baser motives, so he takes care not to cross Dr. Prunesquallor's path. It is,

however, with Titus' two half (if any) witted twin aunts, Cora and Clarice, that Steerpike makes the most headway. By telling them that they are the rightful rulers of Gormenghast, he enlists their aid in setting fire to Sepulchrave's beloved library. In the fire Steerpike acts the part of the valorous hero and saves everyone in the room except ancient Sourdust, the master of ritual. With Sourdust out of the way there is only his elderly son, the crippled Barquentine, standing between Steerpike and the potent post of master of ritual.

The burning of the library also drives the 76th earl to madness and causes him to commit suicide. The book ends on a note of portending doom. The year-old Titus becomes the 77th Earl of Gormenghast... but will the evil Steerpike be able to get all of Gormenghast in his clutches, or will the young Titus be allowed to grow older, and will he then be able to outwit Steerpike? In spite of all the odds against Titus, the book ends optimistically for him, as Peake says:

> And there shall be a flame-green daybreak soon. And love itself will cry for insurrection! For tomorrow is also a day -- and Titus has entered his stronghold.

Whereas Titus Groan has the feel of a Gothic fantasy, it is a slow-moving and episodic book. This is not the case in the second of the series, Gormenghast. Although Gormenghast contains the same atmosphere of the macabre that Titus Groan manifests, it differs from its predecessor in that it has a definite plot, which is actually the interweaving of two major themes. The underlying theme of the entire book is the rebellion of the boy Titus against the age-old daily rituals and traditions of Gormenghast. To Titus these daily rituals are nothing more than a bothersome chore because their original meaning has long been obscured and forgotten.

The secondary theme is the triumph of good over evil which is the climax of an exciting and fast-paced story. In Gormenghast Titus reaches manhood. He is not satisfied with his restricted and seemingly pointless existence at Gormenghast, and decides, at the end of the book, to make his way in the outside world.

It is not an easy decision for Titus to make. He has formed strong attachments to some of the people in Gormenghast, but with the death of his beloved sister Fuschia a major band that has held him to his duties as 77th earl is broken and he finds it easier to reach his decision:

> He had seen his private world break up. He had seen characters in action. It was now for him to take the limelight. Was he the Earl of Gormenghast? Was he the seventh seventh? No, by the lightning that killed her! He was the First -- a man upon a crag with the torchlight of the world upon him!

And thus, at the end of Gormenghast, Titus rides out to meet the world.

//

He soon finds, however, that he has not escaped into a free and wonderful place. He finds himself in the midst of an artificial and unstable industrial society. After the cloistered world of Gormenghast the reader is as surprised as Titus himself to discover a world of sleek cars, shiny planes, and sooty factories. In this strange world nobody is hampered by the old ritual, but there exists nevertheless a set of complex unwritten rules. The penalty for disobeying these rules is often death. Ignorance of the rules is no excuse.

If ritual made prisoners of Titus and the other inhabitants of Gormenghast, conformity is the bane of this outside world. Titus is appalled when he discovers a factory whose windows are filled with a thousand identical faces:

> Every window was filled with a face, and every face was staring at him, and most dreadful of all else, every face was the same.

The people in this world are empty shells. They would make perfect inhabitants of Eliot's Wasteland. They have no destiny. No purpose or goal directs their lives. Titus' experiences with the different people he meets and the effect that they have on forming his character is the basis of this book. One of the basic problems in Titus Alone is Titus' search for him-self. At Gormenghast Titus was the 77th Earl, he was the lord and ruler of his world. Here he is nobody. When he speaks of Gormenghast people think he is mad. Eventually Titus begins to doubt his own sanity:

> He was part of something bigger than himself. He was a chip of stone, but where was the tree? Where was his home? Where was his home?

As a result of being catapulted into the midst of this formless society, Titus is forced to forget his childhood fantasies and to grow up. It is only by so doing that Titus is able to emerge at the end of the book as a mature person. He flees the modern world and eventually arrives once again at the boundaries of Gormenghast. The sight of these familiar landmarks restores Titus' belief in his own sanity, and causes him to realize that there is no need for him to return and to become enveloped in ritual. He can carry his memories of Gormenghast with him, and thus armed he can once more venture forth to explore the outside world:

> He had no longer any need for home, for he carried his Gormenghast within him. All that he sought was jostling within himself. He had grown up. What a boy had set out to seek a man had found, found by the act of living.

In the Titus series Mervyn Peake presents two societies: the old feudalistic and the new industrial. It is for the reader to choose. Peake's portrayal of these societies, although sometimes lightened by a humorous touch (as provided by Irma Prunesqualler's plotting to snare a husband) is nonetheless pessimistic. He offers no solution unless it is a dialectical combination of the better aspects of both old and new. One would then presumably have the peace and quiet of tradition and the dynamic atmosphere of change.

The virtue of a society founded upon age old tradition is that it has definite roots. The inhabitants of such a society, although they may at times be bored, are more often content and happy since they are sure of their roles and of what society expects of them. In a modern or rootless society people do not know what is expected of them. One of two things is bound to happen to the average person. Since there is no unwritten rule telling him how to act, the individual seeks protection by immitating those around him. Hence conformity. The typical inhabitant of a society such as Gormenghast is freer than the average person in a highly industrial and materialistic society. If an individual chooses not to conform...well, the result can be anything from the village eccentric bohemian to the juvenile (or adult) dliquent to the loony bin.

But to get back to Mervyn Peake. His main purpose is to point out the existing evils in society; he does not offer reforms. Peake achieves his goal in unique and fascinating fashion, catching you spellbound in a different world. Time and place are meaningless and you are completely absorbed in the happenings of two totally different and opposing worlds -- the isolated world of Gormenghast and the weird world of industrialism. In Gormenghast, as already mentioned, the main evil is the performance of meaningless ritual. Outside the confines of Gormenghast the main evils are conformity and materialism.

In Titus Alone the beggar who eats money symbolizes the extreme materialism of the modern world. When Titus sees what the beggar has done he calls him a traitor, and says that when the beggar dies the earth will breathe again."

Of the two worlds, Gormenghast is the more appealing simply because most of the inhabitants, although certainly bizarre, basically mean well. Because of its age old tradition, stability and peace are the foundations of Gormenghast.

In the outside world, however, Titus meets only two sympathetic people, both of whom come to unhappy ends. Muzzlehatch, a gruff, brusque fellow, has his zoo destroyed for aiding Titus. The senseless destruction of innocent animals is one of the most touching scenes in Titus Alone. Juno, Muzzlehatch's mistress, also befriends Titus. She comes to love him as much as she loves Muzzlehatch, and when they leave her she is desolate.

One of the most fascinating and despicable characters in Titus Alone is the beautiful socialite Cheeta, who also has a go at befriending Titus. Titus is both fascinated and appalled by her. He rejects her overtures and as a result all of Cheeta's evil traits come to the surface. Cheeta and Steerpike would have made a perfect pair.

Both Cheeta and Steerpike are as appealing as a pair of rattlesnakes. Whereas Steerpike is physically repulsive and thus looks his part, Cheeta is outwardly perfect and beautiful. Like Muzzlehatch, Cheeta has as her aim in life to have fun, and if she can have this fun at the expense of others, all the merrier. She comes by her spoiled and aggressive nature naturally, since her father is the owner of the factory of the thousand identical men.

Cheeta is the epitome of all that is evil in the new society and Muzzlehatch is the epitome of all that is good. Muzzlehatch is a kind man. He is wild and free, he is not strangled by ritual, and he does not give two hoots about what his contemporaries think of him. He enjoys life to the fullest and lives from day to day, not caring or planning for the future. His great love is for the varied collection of animals which comprise his zoo, and it is significant of the society in which he lives that he cares for animals much more than for any human. When his animals are destroyed all the zest and joy of living in Muzzlehatch's life is destroyed too. His goal in life turns from one of enjoying every moment to one of revenge.

As with the first two books of the trilogy, the exact time of Titus Alone is irrelevant. It is sufficient to realize that Gormenghast represents the past; and the outside world, the future. Peake emphasizes the past by constant reference to titles of nobility and the part they play in the social hierarchy of Gormenghast. The past is also emphasized by the physical appearance of Gormenghast itself. Old, decaying, and crumbling, it still endures as a monument to a past civilization.

There is a sharp contrast between the crumbling roofs of Gormenghast and the new, perfectly kept roofs of the city Titus sees outside Gormenghast. In fact such a sharp difference exists between Gormenghast and the outside world that Gormenghast may be not a part of the same universe as is the modern world but another universe -- at least another universe of the mind -- altogether:

> Were they co-eval; were they simultaneous? These worlds: these realms -- could they both be true? Were there no bridges? Was there no common land? Did the same sun shine upon them? Had they the constellations of the night in common?

Thus we have Peake's two sharply defined worlds. One, the old, rooted society, bad only because it bans new ideas and customs; the other, a formless society with no goal or purpose to give it meaning. Which of these is the better?

I would choose Gormenghast...but neither really appeals to me. A combination of old and new would, if attainable, be ideal. But how is such a combination to be attained? Unfortunately, since our civilization seems to be clearly the one depicted in Titus Alone, we have no choice but to make the best of it. Will our world become the formless entity depicted in Titus Alone? I hope not and I believe that so long as a minority -- however small -- exists, who are intelligent, thinking free agents, there remains hope. At least I retain hope.

TITUS GROAN, GORMENGHAST, and TITUS ALONE. Published, respectively, 1946, 1950, 1959, by Eyre & Spottiswoode, London.

Available in the United States through the British Book Centre, 122 East 55 Street, New York.

Prices are 4.00, 4.00, and 4.50 for the three volumes, and the British Book Centre ships.

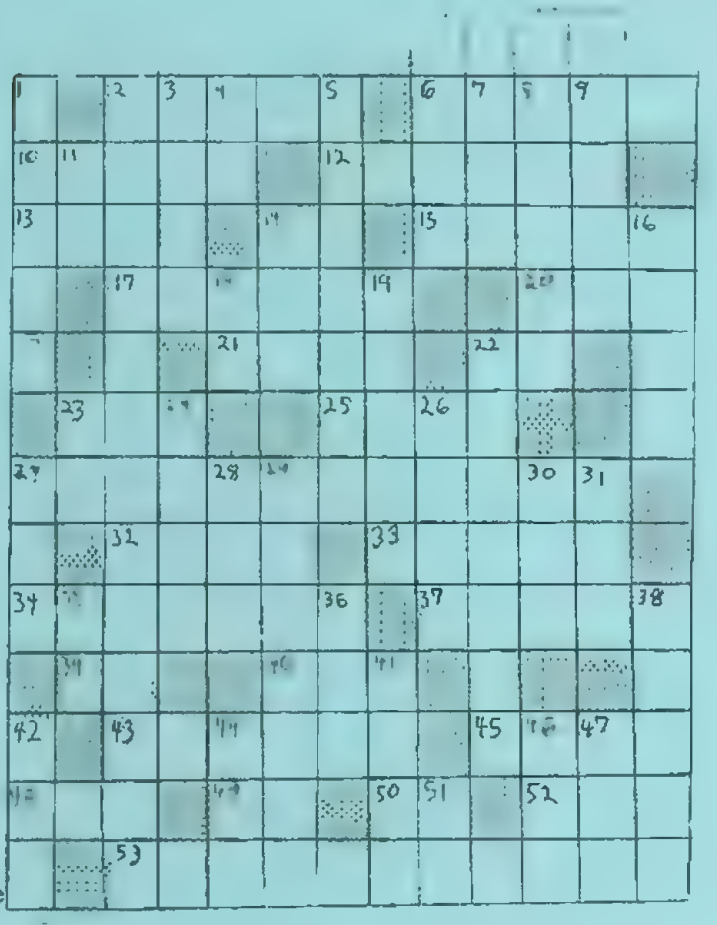
Dust jacket, incidentally, by the author, who also writes and illustrates books for children.

CROSSWORD HORROR

by F.A. Kerr. Solution in Xero 2 -- if Kerr sends it!

ACROSS

2. Measures of poison
6. WT lettercol
10. Dead (Fr)
12. Shaver sometimes
13. Sheckley agency
14. Yiddish lament
15. Like IFA's
17. Tombs
20. Chemical ending form
21. Forster's Machine does this
22. T'S's twin
23. Final (abbr)
25. Vow
27. He paralleled Rabbi Loew
32. Laurel
34. Walking dead
37. Bushy tail
39. Our last pulp
40. Clubhouser
43. File
45. Tale
48. Famous old 27 down (abbr)
49. Naval assent
50. Vol -- __ --
52. ___liostro
53. Pertaining to HPL creature



DO'N

1. Haze and smoke
2. Dried up old bat (2 wds)
3. Royal (3-letter abbr) sailor
4. Two vowels
5. Cuspidor
6. Abdul ___azred
7. Bird
8. _____trar
9. After I die, _ ___
11. __S (international body)
14. Choose
16. Dispatch
18. Demoiselle d'__
19. Seizure
22. Creator of 27 across
23. Very old town
24. Model B explosive
26. Yugo boss (pun!)
27. The best pubs
28. Finding
29. Powers (var)
30. Local airport (abbr)
31. Official name of 30 down (abbr)
35. von (trans)
36. small French coin (slang)
38. Apes
41. Gentleman, in short
42. Eggs
44. Tease
46. The ___inic Actor
47. Militarist? (init)
51. Exclamation

1. the big red cheese

by dick lupoff

One balmy winter's day in the village of Venice, Florida, two small boys wearing tee-shirts, sneakers, and shorts wandered into the only drugstore in town. It was, in addition to being Venice's sole pharmacy, the town's main source of beach goods, the local ice cream parlor, and the only newsstand short of Sarasota.

The taller of the two children looked to be seven or eight years old, chubby, jolly, and extroverted. The other child was his brother, younger by three years. In general he resembled the older boy, but a more introspective and contemplative nature was his. Despite being a younger child, he would be more likely to remember such a day.

The treasury of the two consisted of twenty cents, entrusted to the more experienced judgement of the older boy. It was entrusted to him wisely. He used it to purchase a chocolate ice cream cone for himself, a strawberry ice cream cone for his brother, and, to be shared by the two children, a copy of the fat first issue of WHIZ COMICS.

I quickly and sloppily dispatched my strawberry ice cream and turned my attention to the colorful world of WHIZ COMICS, where that day I made the acquaintance of a friend and adventuring companion for years to come, whose eventual disappearance was a real loss to many beside myself.

I refer, of course, to the greatest of all comic-book heroes, Captain Marvel.

It all started with Billy Batson, a poverty-stricken orphan newsboy, hawking his papers one night outside a subway entrance. Billy saw a dark figure beckon mysteriously to him, then enter the subway. Following the figure, Billy soon found himself ominously alone in an abandoned subway tunnel.

The tunnel opened eventually into a large vault, and lining the wall Billy saw seven great evil-looking statues, representing the seven deadly sins. After this he came to a chamber in which stood a great marble throne. Above it, suspended by the merest thread, hung a huge square-cut block of stone. Seated beneath this murderous weight was a tall, ascetic-seeming man in a long, simple robe. His hair and his long beard were pure white.

Billy paused in awe before the ancient one. The seated figure spoke: " Billy Batson! I am Shazam, the ancient Egyptian wizard! I have fought evil, but my time is up. You shall succeed me!"

"M-me, sir?" was all that Billy could stammer.

"Yes, you are pure of heart. You have been chosen. Speak my name!"

"Shazam!" shouted the boy, and a mighty bolt of lightning, accompanied by a deafening peal of bass thunder, filled the chamber! The frightened boy was gone, and in his place stood a veritable giant of a man. Clad in a tight-fitting red costume and white cape, with the symbol of lightning blazoned in gold upon his chest, Captain Marvel, the World's Mightiest Mortal, had been born.

He was a huge, massively built figure, covered with bulging muscles. He had thick black hair, heavy eyebrows, a powerful above a broad, cleft chin. A golden sash encircled his waste, and he wore gloveless gauntlets and boots of the same hue.

No sooner had the heroic figure appeared than the final strand supporting the stone gave way. It crashed to the throne, fitting precisely between the graven arms. Of Shazam nothing was left. After a moment a cloud rose, assuming the shape of the dead ancient.

"Shazam!" shouted Captain Marvel.

Instead of a boyish falsetto, it was an heroic voice that spoke the wizard's name. Again the thunder and lightning, and in an instant Captain Marvel was gone, replaced once more by Billy Batson.

"Go now," intoned the shade, "and fight the forces of evil. When you have need of the powers at my command, you need only speak my name, and you shall be transformed into Captain Marvel, possessor of all the powers of the six gods whose names spell my name: Solomon, Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles, Mercury." With this speech, even the shade of the wizard faded from view. Billy slowly retraced his path to the street.

Once in the street again, Billy thought that he might have had a dream, so strange and thrilling had been his experiences of the night. The stranger, the hall of the seven statues, the wizard and his words of power... But the first time he was faced with the need of Captain Marvel, Billy tested Shazam's promise and found it true.

Shortly Billy won a job as boy newscaster of radio station WHIZ. His association there with Sterling Morris continued as long as Captain Marvel was published. And of course for that entire time Billy wore those excruciating red tee-shirts and blue slacks.

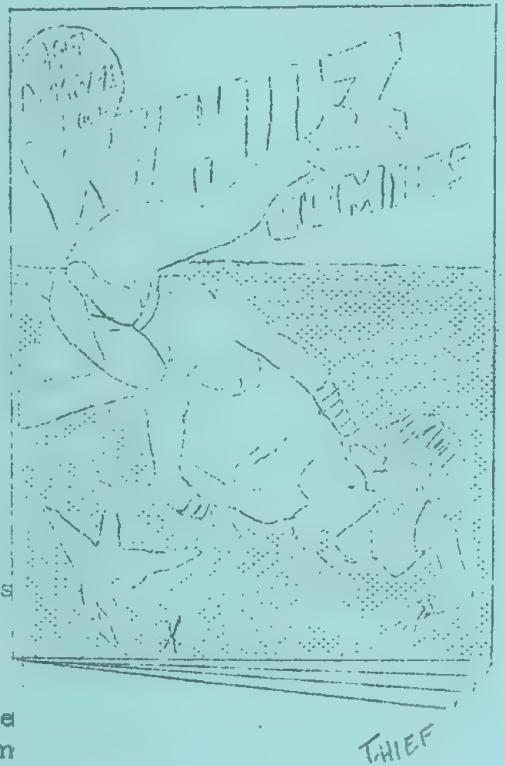
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - crepe-soled boots? - - - - - - - - - - - -

That first Captain Marvel story in WHIZ COMICS started a series of hundreds to appear in WHIZ, AMERICA'S GREATEST, CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES, and MARVEL FAMILY COMICS. Subsidiary characters, designed to exploit some of the popularity of Captain Marvel, popped up throughout the Fawcett line. Captain Marvel Jr starred in MASTER COMICS and in a separate series of his own. Mary Marvel was featured in WOW COMICS, and of course all three members of the Marvel Family appeared in a periodical of that name. There was also a 15¢ CAPTAIN MARVEL STORY BOOK, half text and half full-page illustrations.

A series of Captain Marvel Bunny stories even appeared in FAWCETT'S FUNNY ANIMALS and HOPPY THE MARVEL BUNNY.

The immense popularity of Captain Marvel brought sales so high that for a short time just after the second world war the comic book became a semi-monthly. WHIZ COMICS, CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES, and the various subsidiary comics continued in publication until the 1950's, when Fawcett quit the comics publishing business. Most of the Fawcett titles were sold to Charlton Publications. At least one, HOPALONG CASSIDY, went to National Comics. Title to the Marvel series was retained by Fawcett, perhaps because an adequate price could not be obtained, perhaps because Fawcett contemplated re-entering the comics competition and wanted to start with an established favorite "if and when," perhaps for a combination of these reasons or for others.

The hundreds of Marvel stories published in the years those comics existed showed a rare amount of imagination and continuing interest. Captain Marvel was started as a direct imitation of the older Superman strip, and the similarities in basic organization are remarkable. In both cases there is a super-hero. In both cases he wears a distinctive costume consisting of skin-tight suit, colorful insigne on the chest, a cape, and boots. In both cases the hero can fly, has immense strength and speed, and is generally invulnerable to harm.



In both cases the hero has an alter ego who dresses in mufti. In both cases the alter ego works in a news medium, disguises his dual identity, and has trouble periodically in maintaining the secret of his double life. The bosses of the two "plain" egos are all but interchangeable: ClarkKent's boss at the Daily Planet and Billy Batson's boss at WHIZ -- Perry White and Sterling Morris, respectively -- could pass for brothers. Even the arch-villains of the two strips were very much alike: Ultro of the early Superman stories being a striking prediction of Dr. Sivana yet to come.

Both strips dropped subsidiaries along the way. Those of Captain Marvel have already been mentioned; those of Superman, still going strong, include Superboy, Supergirld, Superbaby, and even a super dog named Krypto.

Both principle characters appeared first in "variety" type comic books. Superman started in ACTION COMICS, along with assorted detectives, cowboys, magicians, and such. Captain Marvel started in WHICH COMICS, along with Lance O'Casey, Golden Arrow, Dr. Voodoo, Spy Smasher, and Ibis the Invincible. Despite turnover in the "other" strips, the two chief characters stayed on in all issues.

Both Superman and Captain Marvel were originated by people with a background in science fiction. Siegal and Shuster, creators of Superman, were fans back in the 30's. The brain behind Captain Marvel was Eando Binder.

But Superman, after it got going and became a popular strip, became a mechanical product, turned out by Wayne Boring or by some anonymous hack.

Everything was deus ex machina. There was no real creative touch in the strip once the first, great days were over, until the current and highly promising regime of Mort Weisinger.

Captain Marvel, by contrast, never ceased to be interesting and imaginative, with real suspense, clever gimmicks, and legitimate plots. Perhaps the reason for this is that Binder realized something about supermen that the writers of Superman never realized. It is a principle stated some years ago in a stf book review; I think, by damon knight writin g of the Lensman series; and the principle is this: there is no real interest or suspense in the usual superman story because there is no real challenge to the super-hero from an ordinary villain. The only way a super-hero can be challenged is by a super-villain, and then the tempation is to make the hero transsuper.

A few attempts have been made to give Superman a real challenge--mainly by un-supering him with kryptonite--but it has never quite come off right.

Of course Binder did not write all the Captain Marvel stories. Many outside scripts were bought, at least according to Larry Ivey, the leading comic-book authority of my acquaintance. But Will Lieberson, Fawcett's editor for Captain Marvel, generally maintained a quality near to Binder's. The chief artist was CC.Beck, and although the quality of the drawing fluctuated widely, and although even at its best it never approached the best Prince Valiant of Flash Gordon strips, still the better Captain Marvel stories were drawn with great vigor and with sufficient skill to make them quite admirable. Some Captain Marvel covers can stand up to any competion ever seen on a comic-book cover.

But Binder started Captain Marvel off with a worthy adversary in the evil Thaddeus Bodog Sivana, "world's maddest scientist" and self-styled Rightful Ruler of the Universe. Dr. Sivana was clearly brainier than Captain Marvel, who had available the wisdom of Solomon but did not always use it. Most of Dr. Sivana's schemes were thwarted, but Sivana himself was never decisively defeated. I sometimes wonder if there is not more than a coincidental resemblance to the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu in Dr. Sivana.

Sivana had two daughters. In the very early Captain Marvel stories we met the beautious Beautia Sivana, a gorgeous blonde who towered over her father and was almost as big as Captain Marvel. She was torn between daughterly loyalty and her attraction to Captain Marvel. In one early story Dr. Sivana succeeded in developing a gas gun which knocked Captain Marvel unconscious. Beautia cared for him until he was fully recovered.

Beautia disappeared, alck, and was eventually replaced by Georgia Sivana, a girl with a remarkable similarity to her father: short, scrawny, angular, bespectacled, brilliant, and evil.

Other continuing characters were in the strip besides Billy Batson/Captain Marvel, Shazam, Mr. Morris, and the Sivanas. In the early 1940's there was a comic-negro named Steamboat Willie who ran a lunch counter near station WHIZ. Whether for racial reasons or others, Willie was soon dropped.

There were several other Billy Batsons, and they all had the power to become Captain Marvel, after a fashion. There was Tall Billy, Fat Billy, and Hill Billy, and on several occasions they were assembled on the request of the "original" Billy Batson to speak the name of Shazam simultaneously and become multiple Captains Marvel, each retaining the distinctive characteristics of "his" Billy Batson.

As the years passed other Marvels appeared. The first was Captain Marvel Junior. He was Freddy Freeman, like Billy a poor newsboy when his great adventure began. Battered in an encounter with evil, apparently dying, Freddy was found by Captain Marvel but appeared too near death for even his potent assistance. The World's Mightiest Mortal carried the boy's broken form into the unused subway tunnel, and summoned the spirit of Shazam with a lighted brazier.

Captain Marvel asked Shazam to grant to Freddy the same strength he had given to Billy Batson. "No" said the shade, "but you may share with him your own powers." Then, to Freddy, he continued: "Speak the name of your hero."

"Captain Marvel," the broken youth whispered in a barely audible tone, and when the thunder and lightening appeared this time, they brought in place of the newsboy Freddy Freeman, Captain Marvel Junior.

Freddy recovered from his injuries but thereafter always walked with a crutch. He fought crime and oppression as did his hero.

Mary Batson proved to be a long-lost sister of Billy, and when she was found and induced to speak the name of Shazam it became apparent that she too could be transformed in thunder and lightening. For Mary Marvel the letters of Shazam's name referred to goddesses; Selena, Hera, Artemis, Zenobia, Aphrodite, Minerva.

Although both Captain Marvel Junior and Mary Marvel had considerable success they never matched the original Captain Marvel in interest of popularity. The style of drawing was not the same--especially in Captain Marvel Junior--and I do not believe that either was written by Binder, except possibly their respective "origin" stories.

Uncle Marvel--in mufti Uncle Dudley Batson--was a fat old fraud who wanted to be a member of the Marvel Family and set out to become one. Dudley appeared in the several Marvel Family adventures. He was a good-hearted bumbler whose fakery was promptly seen through by Billy, Mary, and Freddy, but they tolerated him and pretended to be fooled.

His technique was to shout "Shazam" simultaneously with the others, and (while they were transformed by thunder and lightning) to slip quickly out of his clothes and appear in a Captain Marvel-type uniform. He of course could not fly or perform other marvelous acts, but was always taken along by the other Marvels, who pretended to carry him "accidentally" as they flew, protected him from bullets by "coincidentally" flying in front of him, etc.

One time, however, Uncle Dudley truly saved the day. The world was being ravaged by a terrible and mysterious being who looked like a member of the Marvel Family, who exhibited all of their marvelous powers, but whose mission was universal destruction. Summoning Shazam, the Marvels were told the story; that once in ancient Egypt, the wizard had sought to create a hero for the good of mankind. He had sought a pure-hearted man, had granted him the power to be transformed by saying "Shazam," and had given him an identy with full powers, costumed in black and gold as were the later Marvels in red(or in the case of Junior, blue)and gold.

The Black Marvel had betrayed Shazam's trust. Shazam had sought to destroy him, but the Black Marvel, invulnerable in his altered form, refused to speak Shazam's name and return to his weaker form. Unable to destroy Black Marvel, Shazam had banished him to the farthest star, and the Black Marvel had spent the centuries returning to earth. Now that he was back, the Black Marvel had resumed his evil ways and would, of course, continue to refuse to say "Shazam" under any circumstances. The three Marvels and the shade of Shazam were completely stymied.

Not Uncle Dudley. Waddling up to the Black Marvel he attempted a rapproachment. "Surely we can get along together," he wheedled. "After all, we share the same powers, granted us all by old Hamshaz...er, Shazman... I mean Mazman, or Hashma--"

"You doddering fool," Black Marvel broke in, "the word is SHAZAM!" Lightning! Thunder! In place of the Black Marvel there stood, for the merest moment, an incredibally shrivelled Egyptian, and then, before he could repeat his word of power once more, the Black Marvel was naught but a pile of dust.

The only other Marvel was created by a wicked scientist, and for once Captain Marvel was ahead of Superman. In this case, a reversing-duplicating machine had been invented. Turned on Captain Marvel it created an evil super being called Levram (read it like Serutan). If you want to read virtually the same story today -- fifteen years later, give or take a couple, just pick up the October, 1960, issue of SUPERMAN and read the "Bizarro" sequence.

There were three Captain Marvel serials.

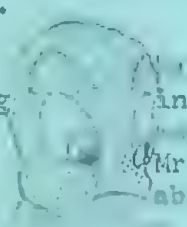
The first appeared during the war, and involved double-length installments in WHIZ COMICS for the story involved the combining of the Captain Marvel and Spy Smasher strips. Spy Smasher was not quite a superman. He was to Captain Marvel approximately what Batman is to Superman. Spy Smasher wore a modified aviator's uniform, had a special airplane and laboratory, and was mainly engaged in fighting the axis. However, Greman agents had captured him and used a sort of brain-warping device to subject him to the will of the Nazi movement.

For months he fought Captain Marvel to a standstill, nearly killing him on occasion when he caught him as Billy. Finally, however, Captain Marvel captured Spy Smasher and the warping machine, reversed its effects, and sent the former victim back to his own comic strip to smash more spies.

When the war ended Spy Smasher donned civies and tried his hand at being Crime Smasher, a sort of roving man against crime. He didn't last.

The second Captain Marvel serial was one of the greatest comic-book stories ever written, and featured Captain Marvel versus the Monster Society of Evil.

The Monster Society was a sort of reverse-english Justic Society of America, composed of an alliance of villains. Among its members were Captain Nazi, a blond, crew-cut, green-suited sort of pseudo-Marvel; Ibac, another evil super-type; Nippo, the Japanese agent; and assorted other operatives and flunkies. The head of the Society was the enigmatic Mr. Mind, whose very nature and identity were unknown.



Month after month Captain Marvel [illegible] the Monster Society, with installments ending and beginning [illegible] in true cliff-hanger fashion. Once Captain Marvel confronted [illegible] defeated a giant, intelligent orange octopus; surely this was Mr. Mind. But it wasn't. Next a powerful and nearly invulner- [illegible]able man. Not Mr. Mind.

Time after time Captain Marvel thought he had located his adversary, only to be mocked in his apparent triumph by new felonies. Finally, as Billy Batson went about his mundane business one day, he casually brushed a little green worm off his shoulder. Hold it! Wasn't there something odd about the insignificant creature? Something hanging from its neck? Yes, it was a tiny loudspeaker, through which Mr. Mind communicated. Mr. Mind was a worm!

The irony, the imagination of it! After two dozen false leads, all large and powerful creatures, Mr. Mind is a worm! You never saw it in Superman.

After more chases and confrontations, on earth, in space, in Mr. Mind's headquarters on the Planetoid Punkus...the villain was finally captured in the WHIZ building. In chapter 26 he was brought defiantly to trial. Under Captain Marvel's forceful ##### prosecution, Mr. Mind turns craven and begs the jury for mercy. It is no use; found guilty of 186,744 murders electrocuted, stuffed, and exhibited in a museum. As a matter of public interest, the authentic remains of Mr. Mind are in my possession. A bogus Mr. Mind is also exhibited falsely by L. Ivey.

Strange that in that day of multi-million murders, Mr. Mind killed fewer than 200,000 persons. The imagination fails.

The Monster Society serial ran for over two years -- twenty-six monthly installments -- yet it never slacked, seldom repeated, and is, to this day, a joy and an inspiration to remember or to reread.

- - - -

The final serial involved Captain Marvel, the World's Mightiest Mortal, versus Ogar, the World's Mightiest Immortal. It was revealed in this story that at one time Shazam had been Shazamo, the O standing for Ogar, a god whose powers approximate the psi functions. Ogar had turned and been banished from Olympus. Shazamo had changed his name to Shazam in rage.

This kind of going back to the era of the comic strip's "origin" story -- or before -- is something which acts as a severe blow to the consistency and continued interest vital to a long-running comic series. Unfortunately, both the Captain Marvel and the Superman scripters were allowed to get away with it repeatedly. A comparison of the re-presented Superman "origin" story in the recent GIANT SUPERMAN ANNUAL is only barely recognizable as the same story that appeared twenty-plus years ago.

But to get back to Ogar, he went around making sane people who refused him allegiance mad; his downfall was in striking a madman, who became sane, gave up the trick to Captain Marvel, etc, etc. It was a pretty lousy story.

The only worse Captain Marvel sequence was a series involving one Tawky Tawny the Talking Tiger. Ecchhh.

But these were occasional lapses, not basic weaknesses in the continuity.

- -

At least John Beresford Tipton lets you tell your wife.

- -

A major element in the superiority of Captain Marvel to Superman lies in the discipline which Lieberson/Binder applied to the stories. Captain Marvel's powers did not resolve the basic problem of each story, as did (and do) those of Superman. Rather, Captain Marvel's powers were considered and taken into account in the construction of problem situations, so that there was a reasonably balance contest, sans tricks, between the challenge and the response.

Superman, on the other hand, is forever fogging the fatal photographic film with his x-ray eyes, or saving the world by sheer strength or speed. He always has some super power up his sleeve, ready to spring when there is no other way out of a box. Captain Marvel's powers were set out early in the series and were well known to the villains, especially Dr. Sivana, so there was no having the hero save everything at the last minute by bringing forth some miraculous ability previously hidden from the villain -- and the reader.

One of the few Superman stories I ever really enjoyed was one in which he was faced with a requirement to stop two speeding bullets at once. And they were going in opposite directions. But when super powers fail, trans-super ones prevail. All he did was catch one in his hand and blow the other away from its target! Other better-than-usual Superman stories are those in which he is un-supered by Kryptonite. Still another good radio sequence had Supie catch amnesia!

In each case, you will notice, Superman became of interest only when he was brought to terms. Native Dancer versus some dray horse is no race and no interest. Only when there is a meaningful contest is there a point in watching. Or in reading.

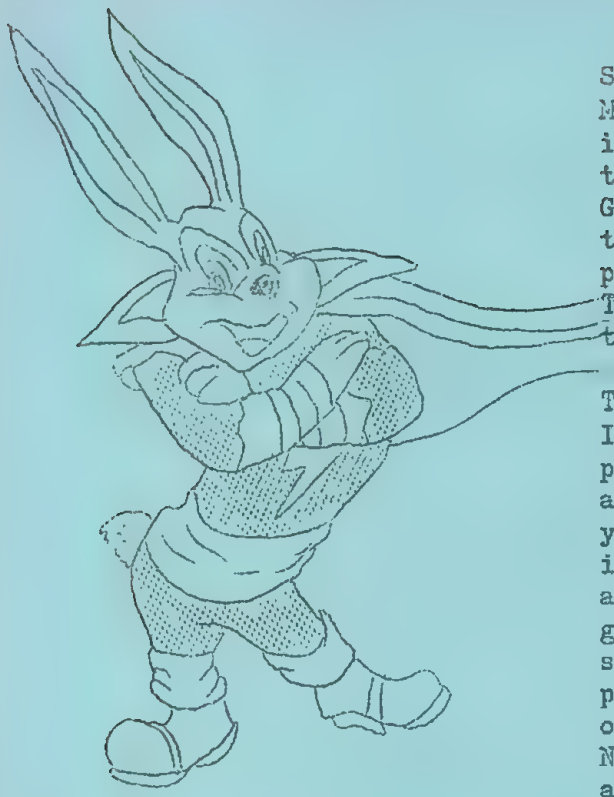
Captain Marvel had great -- but limited -- powers. He could fly. He was impervious. By exceeding the speed of light he reached the Rock of Eternity and could thus travel in time, but this device was used very sparingly, probably because Liberson/Binder realized that it gave the hero too great an advantage. Captain Marvel could not read minds or see through objects. He had no psi powers.

When he was Billy Batson he was, unlike Clark Kent, quite vulnerable, and this gave Dr. Sivana and other villains a fair chance. Liberson/Binder kept their hero in the form of Billy most of the time, thus adding more of an equal contest to the stories.

One accomodation was made, in order to sustain suspense, and this was the same accomodation made in every cliff-hanger since the Perils of Pauline. Namely, when the villain gets the hero at his mercy, instead of killing him outright and at once, he uses some vile device which will make the hero's death slow, painful -- and avoidable. Thus when Billy Batson is thrown, bound and gagged as the expression has it, to a giant carniverous plant, he has time to work loose his gag and say his word before it is too late. Admittedly, this is an idiot device, but its use was mitigated first by its universality and second by the fact that it was not overworked.

Of course Billy always escaped. If he hadn't there would have been no more stories. Even defeated menaces were seldom completely destroyed, and the triumph of good over evil was sufficiently equivocal that a reasonable balance of opponents was maintained, interest was sustained, and sequels were possible without excessive stretching of the reader's ability to suspend disbelief.

Captain Marvel was a superman, but Lieberson never let him get so super that the reader lost interest.



Speaking of the Perils of Pauline, Captain Marvel was featured in a movie serial and in a full-length picture. To get the latter out of the way quickly, it was "The Good Humore Man" with Jack Carson in the title role, Captain Marvel being rung in purely as a mutual exploitation gimmick. The picture is said to have been one of the worst ever made.

The serial, however, is another thing. I have never seen it, but there are supposedly a number of prints still floating around, and if the opportunity arises, you can guess who will be seen sitting in the front row, pop-corn, pop-eyes and all. Because this is supposedly the greatest movie serial ever to be made; surely the best in the rash that were produced in the 40's. Cripes, I remember one with Batman and Robin, and J. Carrol Naishe playing the Japanese spy-master, and zombie machines, and men in animated suspension, and....

There were other Captain Marvel exploitation devices. Comix Cards started on the back covers of the Fawcett comics but were dropped after only two had been printed -- Captain Marvel and Spy Smasher. They were resumed after the war printed inside the comics, but they now involved cutting and pasting, were no longer on slick stock, and in general weren't up to the originals.

There was a Captain Marvel Club -- I was a member. Were you? Hell, I used to join everything and send for every premium I could wheedle out of my parents. Remember Captain Midnight decoders? And the Shadow's luminous rings?

There was Captain Marvel stationary and statuary, comics heroes buttons, you could send for a Mary Marvel pin (if you were a girl), pictures suitable for framing that glowed in the dark -- I had one of those.

There were Captain Marvel tee-shirts and Captain Marvel beanies....

I wish I had a Captain Marvel beanie.

reverberations

The appearance of a letter column in a first issue is always a little bit odd. There, you find yourself wondering, do the letters come from? In this case there is no particular mystery. A few weeks ago -- well, maybe a couple of months, at that, we (Pat & Dick) co-published a one-shot with Walter Breen. Most of the people who are receiving XERO 1 also got that one-shot, The RUMBLE, but not quite all.

For the benefit of those few, The RUMBLE briefly described the experience of the New York Futurians one Sunday last May when we tried to have a picnic in a New York City park. To put three pages of happenings into a single dependent clause, we (five men, four women, and one small child) were driven off by a few hoodlums with the explnation that their gang had a rumble scheduled with a rival gang, and that we "innocent bystanders" might be the victims of an accident if we didn't clear out before the rumble started.

Correspondence reproduced below is gleaned from three sources:

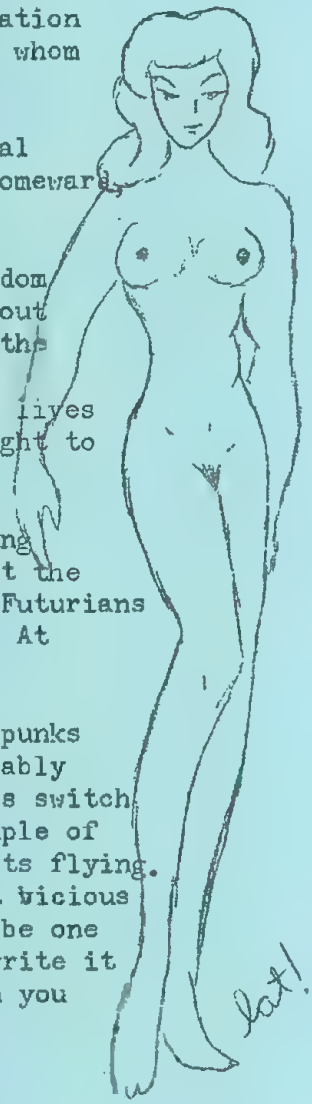
Replies received by the Lupoff's,
Replies received by Walter Breen,
Comments printed by Ted Pauls in the notes and quotes column of his fmz, KIPPLE 3.

Future letter columns in XERO will be of the usual type -- comments on the zine or on any other subject of interest. Additional comments on The RUMBLE or on the comments printed here are welcome, and may be included in the XERO lettercol, but for ghussake, we want to emphasize that this will not be a one-topic letter column.

Harrumph! That's a whole page of the letter section used up and we haven't even gotten to the first letter yet. And it's obviously no use starting it this low on the stencil. So...this is as good a place as any to bring up one final (and irrelevant) point. Namely, if the occasional use of "we" around here gripes you, please note that it is not an editorial affectation, but that the editors of XERO actually and literally are a "we." Use of "I" represents one of us speaking for him (or her) self.

HAL SHAPIRO
2689 Clements Ave
Detroit 38, Mich

I suppose I should mention the reaction of several Misfits to the one shot (Rumble) which was forwarded to me from my Cincinnati address. I showed it to a number of people and we agreed that it was a mish-mash of platitudes and a weak attempt at pontification by the esoteric group of New Yorkers known as Futurians, for whom many fans seem to have very little use.



You detail a "factual" account of an encounter between several Futurians and a couple of punks and describe how you slunk homeward, tails between legs.

You tell of two punks to whom you attempted to "explain" fandom and the inevitable results and mention a "shadowy figure about fifty yards off, and who knows how many others hidden among the trees?" You ask if you, as a group including "five men, four women, and one small child," had the right to "risk the lives and safety of the women...and further, had the adults any right to risk the life and safety of the child?"

The discussion of that flyer between several Misfits (including George and Mary Young who have three and one-half children at the present time) concluded that there were no adults among the Futurians that day. Provided that this isn't just a lot of bullshit. At least, no one adult enough to take on any responsibilities.

Hells bells, had the Misfits on a picnic been approached by punks like that, and had all attempts at talk failed this is problably what would take place. Big Hearted Howard would unsheath his switch blade and proceed to carve. Fred Prophet would sit on a couple of them. Mary and George Young and children would wade in, fists flying. Mable Sims would hit them with Roger. (Even Teddy Bears get vicious at times.) I'd hold someone's coat. And if it happened to be one of the week ends that Harlan Ellison was in town, he could write it up for one of the men's confession magazines far better than you people have done.

That's all I have to say.

HARRY WARNER, JR.
423 Summit Ave.
Hagerstown, Maryland

I enjoyed tremendously this account of the latest Exclusion Act involving Futurians. Are you sure that Sykora didn't send the hoods?

Just last night I let a character crash the queue in which I was standing in a local store without contesting the place that belonged to me, so when the meek get their promised inheritance, you Futurians will be forced to divvy up the loot with me.

PAT & DICK ELLINGTON
P.O.BOX310
Canyon, Contra Costa Co.
California

Always interested to hear what the East Coast branch is up to and found your report most enlightening, though sad to hear the militants are getting to be pacifists. Then again you don't have Donaho around either any more...

EARL KEMP
2019 N. Whipple
Chicago 47, Illinois

Acknowledging receipt of Rumble. Much enjoyed, thanks. No time to comment cause am packing to leave this Friday for the annual 2 weeks plus deal. Will say only that i think you were right in the retreat. After all, cliche, is not discretion the better part of valor and all that crap.

DON FORD
Box 19-T, RR #2
Loveland, Ohio

Received the one shot, RUMBLE. Liked the expression on the dog's face. Don't sell the dog...bring it along to conventions. Next picnic take along some weapons. TRUE mag claims a billy club is one of the more effective weapons of all time...I don't know, that far away look in the dog's eyes, bugs me!

JOE SANDERS
Roachdale, Ind.
R.R. #1

THE RUMBLE was enjoyed here. Having been scuffed and knocked about (in a half-friendly fashion) and soaked to the skin(in a more than half unfriendly fashion), I tend to avoid trouble as best I can.

I still stubbornly stick up for my rights, but...

At the last Midwestcon, Bob Madle was insisting that Walter Breen was a hoax. I assume, from your letter, that he does exist, but he does somehow appear more than lifesize.

RORY FAULKNER
7241 East 20th St.
Westminster, Calif.

Your RUMBLE was quite a fetching little zine- many thanks for the privilege of seeing how the other half lives.

I was only in N.Y. twice- once overnight, on my way to England, when I spent the time at the home of Leon Pearson which is in the wooded area White Plains, so I saw little of the city and the other time, on the way back, when I was laid up with the Asian flu (caught on the Queen Mary) at the apartment of a nephew for nearly a week until able to resume the trip to my little grey pad in the West, much to the disgust of my nephew's wife, who had the job of caring for an aged and hitherto unknown relative, so I missed all the "swank and glamor" that time too. My impressions of N.Y. are therefore mingled with fever dreams I was having, so California looked damn good to me when I got back.

We have our gangs here, too, but not so bad out here in the boondocks where I vegetate. The latest is a gang of weird witches who have been dragging lone women out of their cars at night and beating and robbing them- probably addicts, from their wild antics.

It is hard to say whether you should have stuck up for your inalienable right to eat franks under the G.W. Bridge or not. Seems to me I would have just been fool enough to send the gals on to call out the fuzz, then engaged the punks with ray guns and other fannish weapons. Since I am a female of 71, with few years left, I have a sort of false belligerence because I really don't care what happens to me now!

LEW FORBES
2140 N. Kitley Ave.
Indianapolis 18, Indiana

On the Futurian-Cavalier rumble. Have you forgotten your military training? You should have sought a strategic position--say behind a sawed-off shotgun. This failing, a withdrawal is indicated. The quicker the better, Principles are fine, but they're no substitute

for support in an uneven battle. If there had been but three of your hoodlums, which is likely, and had there been no women or children involved, I would say stand and fight. But as it is likely (equally) that the woods were full of Cavaliers, and as there were women and children present, I feel you did right. None the less, I think I'd have been tempted to load my Marlin and go back. This is an advantaged of living in a city were no jackass has passed a law disarming the citizens. (The Sullivan, or Open-Season-On-People,. Act, would keep me from carrying my fifle, but would it keep some teen-age terrorist from carrying a zip-gun, two switch blades, a blackjack, a lenghth of bicycle chain, a set of brass knuckles, and some capped dynamite? Answer me that...) (And while our knuckle-rapping doesn't seem to be much of a deterant to delinquentism, I feel a shotgun would be. Not just for teen agers. Adults, too.)

But you didn't have either a shotgun, a rifle, or any of the police who are so obviously present when you overpark. So you did the right thing.

That's another thing, Indianapolis is crawling with unsolved muggings, murders, and mischief, but the Board of "Public Safety" has a solution for this. Fifteen more cops this year! On the trafic division...

Just in case you haven't guessed, I'm mad, again. Leaving your little experience, along with the half-spic-half-Irish-beatnik-hating-missing-link, we enjoyed your one-shot. I would like to know who did the artwork.

///I'm the guilty one--RAL.

TED PAULS
1448 Meridian Dr.
Baltimore 12, Md.

(Reprinted from KAPPLE 3)

By the time this print, the news that a (N.Y.) Futurian Society picnic was disrupted by several juvenile delinquents looking for a fight will hardly be news any longer. In THE RUMBLE, a oneshot published by Dick & Pat Lupoff and Walter Breen, the matter is first discussed in an amusing tone, then, on the back page, a more serious note is added. I shan't quote the whole page, but in essence the writer is trying to convince himself that the fans did the right thing by leaving the area. I don't know who wrote this -- it sounds like Ted White but he is given no credit in the colophon, but the way he presents the pro and con it seems a pretty one-sided question. It is almost as if he were trying to alleviate his own conscience, by having everyone who received the magazine write and say confidentially, "You did the proper thing, friend." According to the writer (and I do wish people writing in one-shots would identify themselves in some

way', by leaving they (1) wronged themselves morally by giving into the hoods, and (2) actually encouraged hoodlumism by giving in.

On the other hand, fighting would have(1) been bloody, even if they had won, (2) probably gotten several fans killed, and(3) endangered the lives of several women and one small child. Obviously, this far outweighs the puny points in favor of fighting; how much better to back down to a couple illiterate clods than lose your life, It's as simple as that..

Moreover, there are not likely to be only three hoodlums if they were really looking for a rumble. The study of juvenile delinquency, its effects, its causes; and its adherents happens to be a hobby with me. If the "Missing Link" was really the leader of a gang (as opposed to the leader of an advance party), and if they were really out after a rumble, you can take my word for it that there were many more of the gang within easy shouting distance. Since the leader of a gang is a valuable "catch", he will never lead only one or two of the gang into an area mapped out for a fight, unless several dozen more are close behind. It's only common sense (which you must at least give some teenage hoods credit for) not to place your leader in an overly vulnerable position. The United States Army follows the same tactics with its important generals.

F. M. BUSBY
2852 14th, West
Seattle 99, Washington

Rec'd THE RUMBLE today. Man, I'm glad I don't live in New York...

The business of the "faction" that got all brave in the safety of the Atkins pad is a normal sort of thing--they were mixed scared and angry under the gun, and resented like all hell being pushed around by oafs, so it came out rationalized, later. I've done the same thing now and then. Hmm, I was trying to figure who came up with delayed belligerence--I've never met Lupoff, Condit(who, they tell me, is a Wild Man anyhow), or Carter, so can't guess their reactions very well.

The question of whether or not you should have Fought For Your Rights, and thus helped make America a better place and all that. In my opinion you did the right thing by getting out of there. It is OK to stand up for your rights and ideals, but in my book there's no point in it unless you can make it stick. As you say, you didn't know how many of these kooks you'd have to contend with, and you were in no wise prepared to handle what they might have been prepared to throw. Sure, they were likely bluffing, but how could you tell? Since the benign laws of the sovereign state of New York make it practically impossible for anyone to carry guns, except, of course, for criminals...the Cavaliers knew for sure whether or not they had the bulge on you, you sure as hell didn't have it on them.

Well, I have cut out of situations under a lot less pressure than you report; it bugs me to give under hood-type pressure, but I figure I have my choice: I can get out, or get tromped, or go armed and likely end up in court for it, if I were to improve the environment by blowing a good-sized window into such as your Missing Link. I privately suspect that your ML was bluffing, because otherwise he seems like the type to slash or smash first, rather than making with all that yappity. But that's a lot easier to deduce at a distance than under pressure of contact.

So, I'd say that if you'd been a bunch of armed judo-experts or such, it would have indeed been your bounden duty to strike a blow for law and order and the rights of the peaceful citizinry. But since you were an unprepared group encumbered by women and a child, you'd have had rocks in your heads to do more than try to explain and then possibly test the bluff lightly and cautiously. What you needed was a riot gun.

I dunno -- that crap riles me too, and I don't have any better answer for it than anyone else has. The bastards always catch you unprepared, because who goes around carrying The Difference all the time? A couple of times I've had good luck by being at the utterly self-confident "can do no wrong" stage of a binge and have successfully outbluffed such types by sheer absolute faith. And once a guy jumped on my running board (back when you could still find a few old cars around with running boards) and threatened me with weapons and all. He scared me spitless and I told him to drop off or I'd wipe him off -- and I did, on a convenient truck parked at the corner. Did not go back to see how he came out, either, But I assume he survived, since it didn't make the papers. And once I got rid of a tough and overly threatening hitchhiker by first speeding up so that he couldn't make a move without getting himself killed too, and then (after I located the tire iron under the seat) throwing him into the windshield with a fast stop and putting him out of the car with the tire iron poised for maximum damage. Didn't bother to close the door, even, until after putting a rubber-burning 100 yards between us.

But in both of these cases I had some leverage, and only had to think how to use it. In the usual case, the ordinary guy has no leverage at all, and is lucky to make an escape, let alone salvage any self-respect out of it. As I said, I don't have any answers for this problem. It's all very well to say that (state laws permitting) all citizens should go armed -- but I wouldn't really trust myself to carry a gun at all times -- it would be too damned easy to cut loose and shoot the wrong kook, and end up in the bucket. Tentatively I would suggest that a .38 or .45 loaded with tear gas shells would be a good compromise for anyone who has to hit areas infested with such as your Missing Link very often. After that, I suppose it's a tossup between a good hunk of loaded pipe and a large-capacity squirtgun full of ammonia water or turpentine or something else in the way of outrages to human vision or respiration. And who the hell can be bothered to carry that sort of thing around all the time?

///Bus' letter was addressed to Walter, who asked us to add the following comment: "It's harder to get a New York City gun permit than to get a top secret AEC clearance. I have this from people who have had both."

ABSOLUTE XERO

This being the first issue of XERO, you may be slightly bemildered as to such matters as how you get a copy, how you get a subscription, etc. Well, as for how you got this copy, the reason may be that you contributed material or art, that you're the subject of plaudits or plaints which we figure you're entitled to see, that we trade, or that you're an old fannish friend. If none of those categories takes you in, just chalk it up to editorial whimsy.

As for how to get future issues, just ask for them, the price being a letter of comment, contribution of art or written matter, or a trade.

No one has a subscription as such, nor is there any way of getting one. XERO is published for fun; as a hobby we expect it to cost money, and the experience of putting out this first issue has been more fun and no more expense than a couple of evenings at the theatre and/or some of New York's fancier boozery-eateris. Not that we're giving up our other interests in order to adopt Fandom as a Way of Life... Rather, by cutting back a little, by staying at home a couple of times a month that we would otherwise be out on the town, we can save enough time and money to do XERO.

As for the next issue (and succeeding ones) we are, like most new fmz, short on material. Specifically, we'd like someone to sit down and write the following:

1. AND ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME can use as many more segments as people care to contribute. The first installment, back on page 17, was to have had another section on the symbolism present in Captain Marvel. All right, stop sneering and go on to the next item if that's how you feel. Seriously, stop and think a minute: the innocent boy following that dark figure into an abandoned subway...the ceremony changing the frightened but virtuous boy into a strong and courageous man by supernatural means...the brilliant white-coated scientist scheming to become ruler of the universe, blocked but never destroyed by the mighty figure.... Who was the real hero, who the real villain of the Captain Marvel stories?

This and other matters will be discussed in an article in the AICFAD series, dealing with comic book villains. Walter Breen has announced his intention to write it, and it should be ready one of these months.

Lee Ann Tremper has agreed to try her hand at an installment about her girlhood heroine, Wonder Woman. And a little thought about that series reveals more than a simple adventure story, too.

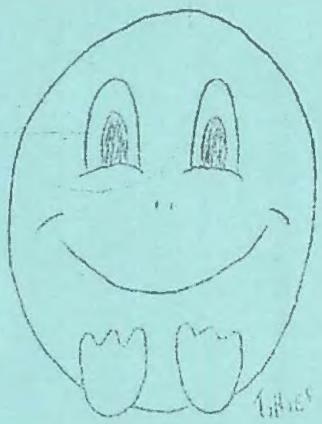
Who else wants to try his hand? Feel like rushing to the defense of Superman, anyone? How about the old aviation strips: Captain Midnight, Barney Baxter, oh hell, there must have been at least a dozen--if not a hundred. And super characters and semi-super characters by the carload. Anybody want to do an article on the common characteristics of supermen?

2. XERO could use a good column or two. Preferably something faanish in nature, but we'll look at anything we get.

3. Articles and reviews, again preferably faanish, mainly because we ourselves tend to write in a sercon fashion, and in order to give XERO a reasonable balance, we're more inclined to look for less serious contributions from others. A short piece by Les Sample is already on hand, titled "Is Ted Pauls a Poltergeist?" to which one might reply by asking "Is Les Sample a Hoax?" especially in view of (1) our never having heard of Les Sample before and (2) the fact that this article arrived written on lined paper in purple ink. But we're taking Sample at face value, and "Is Ted Pauls etc" will be in XERO 2.

One warning about reviews though -- XERO has a distinctly irregular schedule, meaning that X2 may plop in your mailbox before you've finished reading X1, or else it may not arrive until some time in 1961. Caveat scriptor.

4. Poetry and fiction. These will not meet quite the eager reception accorded the other items, and the reasons are like so: First, most fan poetry is atrociously bad, and the encouragement of fan poets by editors seeking material usually elicits nothing but more -- and worse -- poetry. If you have produced some verse which you think is really good, however, and will not rest unless you see it in XERO, we will look at it. That sounds snotty as hell, we know, but the intent is simply to emphasize that we have no desire to publish lousy poetry.



As for fiction, the simple fact is that most good fiction can be sold, meaning that most fanzine fiction, which is given away, is bad. Again, we simply don't want to publish bad fiction -- we'd rather publish no fiction than publish bad fiction. There is an occasional bit of fan fiction (which is not the same thing as fanzine fiction) that is of high quality but that cannot be sold because it is non-commercial in one way or another. Such fiction is welcome here.

5. Art. Covers, headings, spots, anything you feel like. If you're ambitious, and want to put your own art on stencil, so much the better, partly because we're a couple of lazy people and you'll be saving us the work of stencilling; mainly, because an artist generally does a better job of stencilling his own work than does some heavy-handed slob doing it for him.

FINALLY, we want to take this opportunity to thank in public all those fans who made the annual Lupoff pilgrimage to Indiana pleasant this year. For the uninitiated, we're talking about Dick's two weeks of army reserve training in Indianapolis, and this year the off-duty hours of those two weeks were made a real ball by Judy and Lew Forbes, Buck and Juanita Coulson, Joe Sanders & Family, and Lee Ann Tremper. Regrets to Ray and Suzy Beam, whom we missed; next summer for sure, Beams.